



June 1, 2009

Acting Chairman Michael Copps
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 09-51

Dear FCC Acting Chairman and Commissioners:

Across the country, broadband connections are empowering Americans through new opportunities for personal and professional success. By harnessing today's latest technologies, people can start and expand home businesses, mobilize support for candidates and causes, have better access to quality healthcare and education, and become more civically active in their communities.

As the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act requires the FCC to establish a national broadband plan, we hope that the FCC's strategy will bring the benefits of broadband to all Americans. We at the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation believe that this plan presents an important opportunity to close the digital divide.

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to increasing black civic engagement, issue education, volunteerism and voter participation. For thirty-three years, the NCBCP, through its 80 member organizations, 12 state and local affiliates, and strategic partners, has served as an effective convener and facilitator at the local, state and national levels of efforts to address the disenfranchisement of African Americans and other marginalized communities through civic engagement and participation.

In recent years, the Internet has become a prominent forum for political discourse and civic engagement. A report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that 74% of Internet users went online during the 2008 election to get news and information about the candidates and campaigns. Civic engagement groups are using email and websites to increase outreach and civic youth leadership training in local communities. Broadband connections link Americans to vital information and resources in their communities. The FCC's national broadband must ensure that all Americans have access if we are to realize our long-range goal of full economic recovery and rebuild a thriving economy.

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From 2007 to 2008, there was little change in the percentage of African Americans who have a broadband connection at home. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, African Americans increased their adoption rates by three percentage points to 43%. Meanwhile, 55% of all Americans have broadband at home, an eight percentage point increase from last year.

With this in mind, we hope that the FCC will prioritize and take action to achieve universal broadband deployment and adoption to underserved and unserved urban and rural communities. If we do not act quickly, disparities in broadband adoption rates will translate themselves into unequal opportunities and access to resources. All Americans should be able to achieve success through the economic, social, and civic opportunities online.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Melanie L. Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melanie L. Campbell
CEO & Executive Director
Convener, Black Women's Roundtable
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Inc.